

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
JUNE 1, 1938 (WEDNESDAY)

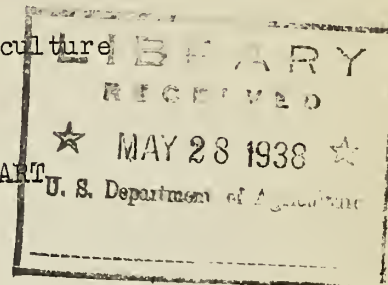
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

SAUCE MAKING IS A SCIENCE AND AN ART



Americans returning from abroad tell many tales of foreign manners and customs. They speak of differences in dress, in speech, and in general living conditions. And usually they remark with wonder about the food. For foreign cooks have introduced them to new seasonings and combinations of flavors—familiar foods served up amid entirely different surroundings.

To most Americans such cookery comes as a revelation. Our own preparation of food is simple—often borders on the plain. And many a homemaker overlooks those little extra touches that mark her a cook of imagination as well as one with a knowledge of good nutrition and cooking technique.

One of the things that makes French cooks famous is their skillful use of sauces. And cooks of any nationality can enhance the flavor of fish, meat, and vegetables if they have a small but representative number of sauces in their repertoire. In this way it's possible to add variety to meals at very little expense.

The making of sauces is part science, part art. Science lays down the principles for combining the ingredients. But when it comes to the art of seasoning it's up to the cook to develop her own combinations by experiment and practice. However, even in this, a few general suggestions are helpful to the inexperienced cook.

1844-38

Number one sauce in most households is gravy made from the drippings of meat. To make a good gravy, the first essential is the right proportion of the three ingredients--fat, flour, and liquid. For every cup of gravy there should be 2 tablespoons of fat, from 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons of flour, and 1 cup of milk, water, or diluted meat stock.

Fat from the meat usually makes up most of the drippings from a roast cooked in an open pan. But when meat is cooked in a covered pan, as a pot roast, there is generally more meat stock than fat. In either case use only enough of the fat to have the proportion of fat to flour and liquid given above. Skim off excess fat and save it for some other purpose. Too much fat in a gravy will separate and give the gravy an oily appearance.

First step after skimming, in mixing gravy, is blending flour and fat. Do this thoroughly to separate the starch grains and thus discourage lumping. Also, this mixing of the flour well with the fat will help bind the mixture so that it won't separate on further cooking.

To get a "browner" flavor in the gravy either let the fat and flour brown a little before adding the liquid, or use browned flour from the start. Browned flour does not have so much thickening power as ordinary flour so it will be necessary to increase the amount of it somewhat.

Another important point in making gravy that's sure to be smooth is adding the liquid cold or lukewarm. This way there is time to stir the blended flour and fat into the mixture before it gets hot. But if liquid is added hot, the starch granules may cook too rapidly, before the grains are separated, and lumpy gravy results. Stir the gravy constantly while adding the liquid and while it is thickening. Then cook it long enough so that there will be no taste of raw starch.

Whether milk or water is used as the liquid in a gravy depends upon individual preferences. To most cooks, drippings from a lamb, beef, or pork roast seem to taste better with water. And many homemakers prefer milk in gravy from

fried chicken or pork chops.

Much used, often misused is white sauce. There are several methods for making this basic sauce. But a method similar to that used for gravy is satisfactory and quick. Unlike gravy, however, white sauce is cooked over water or very low heat to avoid browning or scorching.

After flour and melted butter are combined, the cold milk added, and the mixture stirred until it thickens, put a lid on the sauce and allow it to cook over steam for ten minutes--to lose the taste of raw starch.

White sauce is usually mixed with vegetables in the proportion of one cup sauce to two cups vegetables. Before combining, drain the vegetables. If the vegetable is one rich in mineral content this juice will contain certain valuable food materials. Sometimes it is possible, as in the case of asparagus, to substitute part of this juice for part of the milk in white sauce.

For starchy vegetables such as potatoes, a thin white sauce is suitable. That's one in which one cup of milk is thickened with 1 tablespoon of flour blended with 1 or 2 tablespoons of fat. A medium sauce with twice as much flour to the cup of milk is the kind to serve with succulent vegetables such as celery or onions.

For serving with many of the green vegetables abundant now, hollandaise sauce is especially good. Hollandaise is a rich sauce containing a large proportion of egg yolk and butter with some acid. Cooks who have difficulty making it may be violating the rules for egg cookery or those for combining rich fat mixtures.

Any mixture that contains much egg is cooked over low heat, because the protein in egg coagulates at a low temperature. In combination with an acid, such as the lemon juice in this sauce, the protein coagulates at an even lower temperature. Therefore, cook hollandaise over water. Stir constantly to keep the mixture smooth and to prevent overheating. And stop the cooking promptly as soon as the sauce begins to thicken.

Start the hollandaise by mixing the lemon juice with the egg yolks. Then, as in making mayonnaise, add the fat gradually and stir constantly. Add the first third of the butter to the egg and lemon juice. Then cook this in a double boiler--stirring constantly--until the mixture begins to thicken. Remove from the stove, add the second third of butter. Stir this in rapidly, then add the final portion of butter. After this is blended in, add a little hot water and seasoning, and finish cooking.

Hollandaise made this way should not separate either from overcooking or from too rapid addition of the fat.

The cook who can make these three sauces can probably master any others in the cook book. But that is only a start in saucemaking. Next comes the "seasoning to taste."

That phrase may mean much or little--depending on the cook. White sauce for instance can become a creamy cheese sauce with a little grated cheese melted in it. A little minced bacon, chopped parsley, green pepper, or onion juice added makes it a more interesting accompaniment for new potatoes.

Gravies and other sauces lend themselves just as well to different seasonings. Dry mustard, mace, a tiny flavor of cloves or ginger, a grating of nutmeg--these are only a few of the materials the imaginative cook can turn into a combination of flavors that is her very own. A dash of cayenne, paprika, curry powder, celery salt, or a bit of ground cooked ham--these are more.

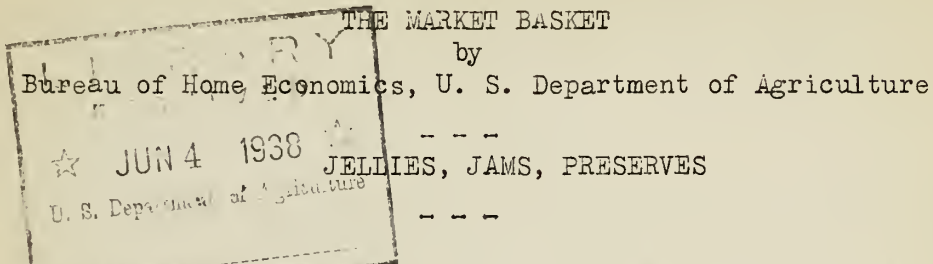
Of late there has been a revival of interest in the use of herbs for seasoning. Seasoning with these, of course, is a subtle art, and the more the cook uses them the more possibilities she finds for them in sauces. Some suggestions are: chopped or ground green leaves of tarragon in a sauce for fish or eggs; leaves and tips of basil in white sauces and milk gravy or in tomato sauces; chopped leaves of dill added to a cream sauce for chicken; ground horseradish root in sauces for meats; mint leaves to flavor a sauce for lamb and chopped chive leaves to add a delicate onion like flavor to nearly any sauce.

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
JUNE 8, 1938 (WEDNESDAY)

WASHINGTON, D. C.



Off the press in time for the summer season of fruit abundance comes "Home-made Jellies, Jams, and Preserves", latest publication of the Bureau of Home Economics. Concise--practical--modern, this bulletin is a handy guidebook to the woman who wants to do any sort of sugar preservation of fruit. A copy of the bulletin -- F.B. 1800-F -- may be obtained free from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Introductory pages of this publication deal briefly but thoroughly with the important principles involved in making these fruit "sweets". Packed into the rest of the bulletin are specific directions and recipes for making not only jellies, jams and preserves, but conserves, marmalades, and fruit butters as well.

Of all the kinds of sugar preservation of fruit probably the most exacting is jelly making. Grandmother, in her day, had to figure out for herself how to make good jelly -- by supplementing rule o'thumb methods with what she learned from experience. Today, science explains many of the things grandmother knew, adds a few pointers based on the modern knowledge of fruit and the cooking processes.

Proportions of ingredients and time of cooking for jellies may never be worked out with absolute exactness. For fruit varies considerably from season to season -- sometimes even from batch to batch.



General rules are available, however, for adding water to fruit, boiling the water and fruit before extracting the juice, adding the sugar, and other important details. Tables have been worked out giving this information for different fruits. Material for such tables is based on data gathered from experimental jellies cooked under home kitchen conditions.

First consideration in making jelly is selection of the fruit. A good fruit for jelly making is high both in pectin and acid. These two, with the added sugar bring about a "jell" of the juice after heating. Good fruit for jelly must also have good flavor.

Of all the good jelly fruits currants are probably "tops". They rate ace high on all three counts --- flavor, pectin and acid. Other high rankers among the fruits that will soon be in season are blackberries, gooseberries, and raspberries. Crabapples and grapes come later.

Pectin and acid are most abundant in fruit that is slightly underripe.. Flavor is best in ripe fruit. To get a jelly that both tastes good and "jells" satisfactorily, combine ripe fruit with some that is slightly underripe.

One of the fundamental rules in jelly-making technique is "reduce cooking time to the minimum". Cooking fruit overlong reduces the jelling power of the pectin, destroys fine fruit flavor, and often spoils the color. For this reason, use a minimum of water. Excess water will have to be cooked off and that will unnecessarily lengthen cooking time.

In order to extract pectin, boil fruits until they are soft. Naturally, the more firm the fruit, the more water will be needed, and the longer will be the time of cooking. Quinces, a very firm fruit, take about 2 cups of water to a pound of fruit. And it takes from 20 to 25 minutes to boil them soft. Red raspberries, on the other hand, need only to be crushed with no water added. And they take only from 5 to 10 minutes to cook to the right stage for extracting juice.

Another way to cut down cooking time -- besides using the minimum amount of water -- is to use a large, flat-bottomed pan that permits rapid evaporation. Remember, of course, to count cooking time only after the fruit comes to a boil. Stir fruit constantly to prevent scorching.

After fruit has been boiled until it is soft, pour it at once into a jelly bag. Let the juice drip, and press the bag to get every bit of the juice. Clarify the juice by straining it again through a fresh jelly bag that has been wrung from hot water.

Next comes the second period of cooking for the fruit -- though now it's in the form of juice. And here it is, that modern jelly making differs radically from the old. Formerly, it was the practice to cook the juice first, until it had become fairly concentrated, then to add the sugar.

Today, jelly experts advise combining the sugar with the juice before heating. This cuts down on cooking time. And sugar tends to prevent destruction of the pectin. Here again it's a good plan to use a large, flat-bottomed pan for cooking. Stir the sugar and juice until the sugar is dissolved. Then boil the mixture rapidly -- until the jelly stage is reached. How long this will take depends upon the fruit. With currants for example, the juice and sugar usually need to be boiled only a short time. Other fruits, less rich in pectin and acid, take longer.

Today we use the same satisfactory jelly test that grandmother learned from her mother -- made by dipping a large spoon into the boiling sirup. Lift the spoon so that the sirup runs off the side. When the sirup no longer runs off the spoon in a steady stream, separates instead into two distinct lines of drops, which "sheet" together, stop the cooking.

When the jelly-maker gets to this point her job is practically finished. She has only to remove quickly the scum that forms on the sirup -- then pour this sirup carefully into sterilized glass containers. After the jelly is set it must be sealed and stored.

On these and a good many other points does the jelly section of the new bulletin enlarge. It reminds the jelly-maker to cook only small quantities of fruit at a time -- to weigh the prepared fruit -- to measure sugar and liquids. It tells how to prepare fruits for jelly -- cautions the cook not to throw away cores because of their pectin content.

No part of the jelly procedure does this bulletin fail to mention. There is information there to help in selecting jelly equipment. There are directions for sterilizing jars -- for sealing and storing jelly -- for canning fruit juice for later jelly making. There are special instructions for taking second extractions of juice from fruits that are especially rich in pectin and acid. There is another section on pectin extracts, both commercial and homemade, and another outlining the causes for jelly failures with suggestions for what to do about them.

All in all -- the new bulletin will be a useful handbook for those who want to make the perfect jelly -- tender, quivering, translucent, and retaining the characteristic flavor of the fruit from which it comes.

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
JUNE 15, 1938 (WEDNESDAY)

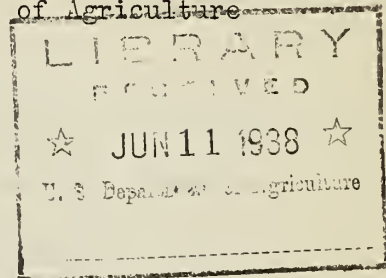
WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

CHERRIES HERALD THE FRUIT CANNING SEASON



"Cherries are ripe" -- that's the chant that is now or soon will be spreading over neighborhoods throughout the United States. To the birds and children this is an interesting statement of fact that calls for immediate investigation. But to the woman who intends to do some home canning it is even more significant.

Translated into her language, "cherries are ripe" means "fruit canning season is getting into full swing". For cherries are a sort of forerunner to the summer canning fruits. In most sections of the country they precede or come at the same time as blackberries, currants, gooseberries, and raspberries. And they are followed shortly by peaches in quantities for canning.

Cherry trees are distributed rather generally throughout a large part of the United States. The sour cherry is a favorite for home canning and pie making. Sweet cherries are popular for eating raw, and many of them are canned commercially.

In general, canning cherries is typical of all fruit canning. Most fruits are definitely acid foods. In them, forms of bacteria are killed within a reasonable time at the temperature of boiling water. For that reason all fruits may be processed in a boiling-water bath, in a steamer without pressure, or they may be canned by the open kettle method.

Of all these, the boiling-water bath is the most satisfactory for home canning. And fortunately, apparatus for this is inexpensive. It consists of a boiler or a bucket with a tight fitting lid. This should be large enough to hold as many containers as are likely to be processed at once and high enough to permit covering them with 1 or 2 inches of water.

Have the boiler fitted with a rack so that the water may circulate freely under the jars or cans. During the processing see that the containers are far enough apart so that the water also circulates between them. See that the water in the canner is boiling before you put the jars or cans in, and have the water high enough to cover them 1 to 2 inches.

Time of processing varies with the fruit, and it also depends upon the altitude of your particular section of the country. At high altitudes water boils at a temperature a few degrees lower than it does at sea level. Therefore, fruits processed in boiling water at high altitudes will need to be processed longer than those at sea level. Directions ordinarily give processing time based on the boiling point at altitudes of 1000 feet or less. For altitudes above 1000 feet, increase the length of processing 20 percent for each additional 1000 feet.

In any case -- count processing time only after the water comes to a full rolling boil. Keep the water boiling during every minute of the processing. And as the water boils away, add more boiling water.

Either glass or tin containers may be used for canning fruit. Many homemakers like to use glass jars for cherries and other red fruits. But if you prefer tin, be sure to use the sanitary or R-enamel cans for canning cherries, most of the berries, currants, and plums. These red-colored fruits fade when they are canned in contact with plain tin.

Sanitary or R-enamel cans have a special bright, gold-colored finish inside that prevents the acid of the fruit from reacting with the tin. When this reac-

tion does take place it spoils the pretty red color of the fruit, although it does not spoil the food for eating. For other fruits than those mentioned, plain tin is satisfactory.

Sugar used in canning fruit helps to preserve both color and flavor. This is usually added in the form of sirup. To make sirup, boil the given amount of sugar and water, then strain. Reheat when you are ready to use. Many homemakers make up a heavy sirup ahead of time. Then they dilute this with water to get as light a sirup as they may want.

Whether you use thick, thin, or medium sirup depends on the sugar already present in the fruit. Sweet cherries require only a medium sirup; sour cherries need one with more sugar. Tart gooseberries also require a heavy sirup; but peaches and apricots need one that's light or medium.

A medium sirup is one that has about 12-1/2 cups of sugar to the gallon of water. Heavy sirup has 28 cups of sugar to the gallon of water. And light sirup has only 5 cups of sugar to the gallon of water. Have the sirup boiling hot when it is poured over the fruit.

Even a small amount of sugar improves the flavor and appearance of fruits. But some women like to can their "pie fruit" with no sugar. If you do it this way, add as little water as possible. In juicy fruits such as cherries, currants, plums, and berries, add no water at all when you omit the sugar.

There are two ways to prepare juicy fruits for canning without water. One is to extract juice from the riper fruits by crushing, heating, and straining. This boiling hot juice is poured over the remaining fruit packed into the containers. The other method is to simmer the fruit for 2 to 4 minutes before packing in the cans to draw out the juice. Heat slowly to avoid scorching the fruit.

It is not necessary to sterilize glass jars to be used in processing. But they should be clean, and should be kept hot so that they will not break when

plunged into the boiling-water bath. Wash glass jars in soapy water, then rinse. Put them in a pan of warm water with a rack or cloth in the bottom. Bring the water to boiling, and keep the jars hot until you are ready to use them. Tin cans need to be washed in soapy water, rinsed, and drained. The lids should be kept dry.

When packing foods, remember that all fresh foods contain some air within their tissues. In canning it is desirable to get as much of this out as possible. Glass jars are not completely sealed before processing and some of this air is forced out of the jars while they are in the canner. In tin cans, fruits are sometimes "exhausted" before sealing. That is, the cans are filled with the raw fruit, placed in a boiling-water bath deep enough to come within about 2 inches of the top of the cans. The water bath is covered to hold in the steam, and time is counted from the time the space above the cans is filled with steam.

Another way to get air out of the fruit is by precooking in an open kettle before packing into the cans. Precooking also speeds up processing because the food is already hot when put in the canner. Pack containers quickly so that the precooked food remains hot and so that glass jars do not have time to cool off. Use enough liquid to prevent too dense a pack. Work out air bubbles with a knife blade or spatula.

Leave a little head space when packing the cans. This head space between fruit and the top of the can allows for expansion of the food during processing. Without it, it is impossible to seal the cans properly. In glass jars this head space is about 1/2 inch -- in tin cans from 1/4 to 1/2 inch.

Tin cans, of course, are sealed before processing starts, and immediately afterwards they are plunged into running cold water to stop the cooking. Glass jars are not fully sealed when they go into the boiling-water bath. But immediately after processing, take glass jars out of the canner, and finish tightening the lids. Allow the glass jars to cool in an upright position. Then when they are cool turn them over to inspect for leaks.

These are some of the high points in fruit canning. Of course other general canning rules apply here as well. Products for canning should be of high quality and of the same degree of ripeness. Take care to see that the whole process is carried out in a sanitary manner. Can fruits as soon as possible after they are picked.

Rules for canning vegetables are in many ways like those for canning fruits. But with corn, peas, beans and other nonacid vegetables and meats it is not possible to can satisfactorily without the use of a steam pressure canner.

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
JUNE 22, 1938 (WEDNESDAY)

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE MARKET BASKET

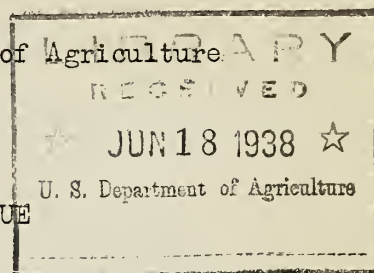
by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

-- --

BEST COOKERY MAKES VEGETABLES
ATTRACTIVE -- SAVES FOOD VALUE

-- --



Part of diet advice these days is -- "Eat plenty of vegetables, and get as wide a variety as you can". For vegetables, nutritionists point out, are among our most important foods. They please the appetite and are valuable sources of certain necessary vitamins and minerals.

On the whole, the people of this country are taking the advice of nutritionists to heart and eating more vegetables than ever. Just how many more it's impossible to say. But figures for commercial production of vegetables give some idea. They show, for instance, that now there are about 14 bushels of carrots shipped fresh to market for every one bushel shipped twenty years ago.

At this time of year, of course, it is easier to get both "plenty" and a "variety" of vegetables. For during the summer most home gardens swell the supply of vegetables that are produced commercially the year around.

But no matter how the crops may come and go the homemaker has always the same responsibility towards vegetables in the kitchen. There she writes the final chapter in the life history of the cabbage and the spinach. And for any vegetable there can be no better climax than for it to be served up in a nourishing and appetizing dish.

1961-38

Naturally, how "nourishing" a cooked food will be depends upon the method of cooking -- how well it conserves the vitamins and minerals. Some of the vitamins are destroyed in food when it is heated in the presence of air. Or they may dissolve in the cooking water and be lost if that is thrown away. Heat does not destroy mineral salts. But they, too, dissolve and are lost if the cooking water goes down the sink.

Paramount rule for cooking vegetables to save food value is -- "Cook in as short a time as possible, using the least water that is practical". Both help to conserve vitamins. And using little water leaves none or very little when the cooking is done.

If conserving food value were the only point in cooking, the foregoing rule would cover everything. But the wise cook does not rely on the "it's good for you" talking point to put her vegetables across. Occasionally she may even sacrifice a bit of food value in the interest of attractiveness. But she knows that it will be made up in the second helpings -- the larger portions that are eaten.

Since we ordinarily eat foods because they "look", "smell", and "taste" good, other important cooking points concern flavor, texture, and color. Of all these in vegetables, probably color is the trickiest of all to deal with.

Vegetables fall into four color classes -- the yellow, the white, the green, and the red. Yellow vegetables give the cook little trouble; white vegetables create few cooking problems. But the "greens" and the "reds" need special attention.

Cook in an uncovered pan -- that's the main thing to remember when you cook green vegetables. For chlorophyll, the color pigment in green vegetables, is easily affected by cooking when there is acid present. Leaving a lid off the pan allows any vegetable acids that volatilize to go off into thin air. This

acid coupled with overlong cooking turns the attractive green color to a sort of dull olive drab.

For some time homemakers have known that putting a pinch of soda in the cooking water keeps the green vegetables from fading. The scientific explanation is, of course, that the soda neutralizes the vegetable acids so they can't change the green pigment. Cooking science now frowns upon the practice -- for an excess of soda reduces vitamin content and detracts from the flavor of the vegetable.

For the "reds" such as beets, cook in a covered pan. If necessary, add a little dilute acid to the cooking water. The color pigment in these vegetables stays red in acid, starts to fade in alkaline waters. Keeping the lid on holds in the volatile acids. Added vinegar, lemon juice, or cream of tartar also keep the cooking water on the acid side.

White vegetables go through no such dramatic changes. They stay white in water that is slightly acid and become yellow or greenish in alkaline waters. So cook white vegetables much the same as the red.

As to flavor, vegetables are divided into three camps -- strong, medium and mild. Cabbage is considered one of the first group. In cooking it you must take care not to develop the flavor by cooking in a closed kettle for a long time. This makes it an unappetizing, brownish vegetable, with an undesirable odor and flavor.

For mild vegetables such as delicately flavored June peas, use a minimum of water. Cook until just tender. By that time the water should be condensed to be just enough to serve with the vegetable. Adding salt brings out the natural flavor of all vegetables.

"Do not overcook" -- that's the negative rule that must be observed if vegetables are to have a pleasing texture. Vegetables are done when they are tender but not soft and flabby. And cooks are more likely to err on the side of over-

cooking rather than undercooking. Having the vegetables of uniform size and keeping the cooking time down by starting the vegetables in boiling water also helps in getting pleasing texture.

Finally, if you want a vegetable dish to taste best, serve it immediately. If that is impossible, let it cool and reheat when you need it. Keeping a dish "warmed up" for long soon makes it mushy and uninteresting.

These are some of the general cooking rules. But of course each cooking method has a technique of its own. Probably the most common ways to prepare vegetables are boiling, steaming, and baking. But panning is a method especially suitable for the summer succulent vegetables. In panning it is possible to conserve all the food value and flavor of a vegetable as well as to add milk in some cases.

Panned Summer Squash

Summer squash is one of the vegetables that is suitable for panning. Have the squash young and tender. Cut it into small pieces and leave the skin on unless it is very tough. Melt a little fat in a skillet. Brown that slightly. Then put in the squash, season it, cover and cook for 10 to 15 minutes at a moderate heat. Remove the cover and cook a little longer for the liquid to evaporate. Serve hot.

Five-Minute Cabbage

Cooking vegetables in milk is another method that conserves food value. For the milk is not drained off, but used as a sauce to serve with the vegetable. Cabbage, for instance, cooked in milk retains its crispness and is delicate in flavor and color. For this heat about 2 cups of milk for every quart and one-half of shredded cabbage. Cook cabbage and milk for about 2 minutes. Then add a cup of cream or rich milk, thickened with 3 tablespoons flour and seasoned with melted butter, salt and pepper. Cook rapidly for 3 or 4 minutes, stirring constantly.

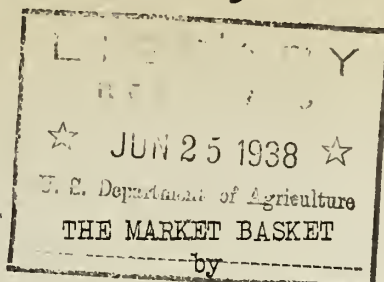
Baked Tomatoes

Tomatoes "a palatable source of several vitamins" are best known dietetically for their vitamin C and vitamin A ^{content}. They have a lifetime membership in summer salad bowls, but they are equally as delicious baked. Wash them, remove the stem ends, cut them in half. Then put them in a shallow greased baking dish. Cover with buttered bread crumbs seasoned with salt and popper. Add a little water -- just enough to keep them from sticking to the dish. Bake in a moderate oven for about 30 minutes. Then the crumbs should be brown -- the tomatoes tender.

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
JUNE 29, 1938 (WEDNESDAY)



WASHINGTON, D.C.

1.9
H75M
Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

CANTALOUPE SHOPPER CAN LEARN TO TELL THE "GOOD" ONES

Summer's here for sure! Vacations are beginning--the mercury creeps upward--swimming's better--human skins are getting that healthy, tawny look. And just to cinch the matter, muskmelons are abundant and less expensive. The lilted words, "Cantaloup"--"Honeydew"--"Honeyball"--"Hearts of Gold" are brightening grocery ads.

As these names suggest, the muskmelon is no ordinary market commodity. It has led an interesting life since man began to cultivate it along about the year 1, in northern India. From there it travelled vagabond fashion all over the world--westward to Persia, Turkistan, and via the shores of the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic--to America.

Like any traveller, the muskmelon has felt the influence of the many countries it has visited. Probably this is most noticeable in the exotic names of its many varieties. It was in Italy, for instance, that the name cantaloup was first applied to a muskmelon. Originally this name referred to a variety cultivated in the gardens of the Italian castle of Cantalupo.

Today, the name cantaloup still sticks, but it has outgrown its first restricted meaning. In America we use it for many varieties of muskmelon--all those that are small, oval, netted, and suited to shipping.

2014-38

Although it sounds a bit like a schoolboy's riddle, the simple fact is that "all cantaloups on our markets are muskmelons, but many varieties and types of muskmelons are not true cantaloups." Those of the "muskmelon" type include the Honeydews and Honeyballs on the market now--the Persians and Cassabas that come a little later.

Shoppers who have noticed improvement in market cantaloups during the past couple of years may give much credit to a new muskmelon variety--the Mildew Resistant No. 45. This may be a singularly matter-of-fact name for a cantaloup, but there is nothing matter-of-fact about its good flavor, good shipping qualities, and its resistance to mildew disease.

This new cantaloup is the result of work by plant breeders of the California Experiment Station and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Research started in 1925 when an outbreak of powdery mildew threatened to wipe out all the muskmelons in Imperial Valley, California.

After years of careful breeding work, these scientists produced the new variety, Mildew Resistant No. 45 and released it to growers in 1936. This year over 90 per cent of all the cantaloups in Imperial Valley, California, and in Salt River Valley, Arizona, will be of this new variety. These two regions produce more than half of the commercial crop for the United States.

Because of its resistance to mildew and good shipping qualities the Mildew Resistant No. 45 may be picked ripe from the vine. Then after precooling, and a trip of nine or ten days in a refrigerated car, it will arrive on Eastern markets in tip-top table condition.

With the advent of this and other improved cantaloup varieties chances for getting "good" ones on the market are better than ever. But a knowledge of how to pick melons is still a part of any shopper's stock-in-trade.

In the first place, melons with good flavor are ripened on healthy vines. For it takes a good leaf surface to put the sugar and other things that make for flavor into a melon. Therefore, if the shopper happens to be in the fortunate position of being able to pick her melons straight from the field she looks first to see that the vine is vigorous and green.

Very few women, however, are able to select a melon in the field. But there are other indications that tell pretty well the things that are important to eating quality. Time of picking makes a great difference--that is, how mature the melon was when picked.

Best cantaloups for eating are picked off the vine, ripe--not green or overripe. To check on this, examine the stem end of the cantaloup. Picked full ripe it will have a smooth even scar with no stem at all attached. But the cantaloup picked green will have a portion of the stem still attached. Or there will be a rough place where it was pulled out.

Next, look the whole cantaloup over critically. It should be firm, well netted. And the color underneath these nettings should be a light golden yellow. See that this golden yellow color is uniform over all the melon. Overripe cantaloups will have a pale, faded-yellow ground color. In underripe ones this will be a pure green or a light canary yellow.

Some cantaloups do their own advertising when they are ripe, for then their characteristic musky odor becomes more noticeable. And in some varieties a good sweet melon will have little globules of sugar about the stem scar. These are a sort of cherry red color--about the size of a pencil point.

Honeyballs and Honeydews are popular muskmelons that do not come in the cantaloup class. The Honeyball is only slightly netted and when ripe its skin changes from a lightish green to a lightish yellow. Its flesh is spicier and sweeter than that of cantaloup.

Honeydews also have a green flesh and are slightly elongated in shape. These, unlike cantaloups, are best picked when they are still growing. So on the market they usually have their stems attached. These are ready to eat when there is just a change from a light green to a paler green in the skin. And there is often a slight tinging of yellow.

But no matter how adept the homemaker gets at picking the good ones there probably always will be a slight feeling of suspense just before the melon is cut up to be served. For the final and most important test of all is the tasting.

To prepare melons for eating--chill them. Some homemakers like to wrap them and keep them in the refrigerator. Others prefer to keep them outside because of the penetrating musky odor that sometimes pervades the refrigerator.

If the muskmelon is not chilled in a refrigerator, serve halves of the small ones in chipped ice. Chipped ice in the center is not a satisfactory way of chilling the melon. For while the ice looks cool at the beginning, the ice water that soaks into the melon meat dilutes the flavor.

For the most part, serving muskmelons is a matter of arrangement and combination with other fruits. Larger melons such as the Honeydew may be sliced and served up on attractive plates. Over one end may be a spray of pale green grapes--or for more contrast--several cherries with their stems.

Melons that are cut in half may be served "as is" or with a dipperful of ice cream in the center--or maybe red raspberries or other fruit. Just a faint sprinkling of salt will bring out the sweet melon flavor. And contrasting or harmonizing glassware and table linens will set off the delicate melon colors.

